

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 2878

S/S FOR CARTER LIASION

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AG

SUBJECT: U.S.-ALGIERIAN RELATIONS: DISCUSSION WITH PRES.

BOUMEDIENE

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE DECEMBER 8 FOR DISCUSSION U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. WHILE BOUMEDIENE REITERATED THEMES WHICH ALREADY FAMILIAR, HIS REMARKS ARE OF INTEREST. HE SAID ALGERIANS WAITING TO SEE WHAT POLICIES NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD FOLLOW, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO NORTH AFRICA AND CIEC. HE REITERATED ALGERIAN POSITION ON OIL PRICES, SAID HE HAD READ OUR AIDE MEMOIRE ON SUBJECT GIVEN TO MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY, BUT EACH OF US SAW PROBLEM FROM HIS OWN ANGLE. ON ANGOLA HE SAID WE SHOULD NOT MAKE MISTAKE OF THINKING ALGERIA ALLY OF CUBA AND SOVIET UNION. ON SAHARA HE MADE FAMILIAR PLEA FOR NEUTRALITY IN ORDER PRESERVE OUR INTERESTS IN ALGERIA. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THERE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS AND HE PROMISED SEND NEW AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON BEFORE OR JUST AFTER INAUGURATION. END SUMMARY.

2. CALLED ON PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE DEC. 8 AT MY REQUEST FOR TOUR D'HORIZON PRIOR MY DEPARTURE ON HOME LEAVE. STARTED OFF BY GIVING HIM COPY OF GENIUS OF ARAB CIVILIZATION, A USIA PRESENTATION ITEM, AND WE HAD TEN MINUTE DISCUSSION ON EXTENT AND NATURE OF ARAB STUDIES IN U.S. DISCUSSED BRIEFLY FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION HERE, AND I SAID I HOPED IT WOULD BE LESS EXPENSIVE THAN OURS. HE SAID EXPENSES HERE NOT GREAT, BECAUSE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION DID ALL THE WORK.

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I NOTED THAT WE WOULD SOON HAVE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND IT

SEEMED TO ME IT WAS TIME TO RESUME DIALOGUE WITH ALGERIANS. APPOINTMENT OF ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON WOULD BE STEP FORWARD IN THIS RESPECT AND I COULD ASSURE HIM DEPARTMENT OF STATE WOULD DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO FACILITATE HIS MISSION. ASKED IF HE HAD ANY WORDS HE WOULD LIKE ME TO CARRY BACK TO WASHINGTON.

3. PRESIDENT SAID QUESTION IN EVERYONE'S MIND WAS WHETHER THERE WOULD BE CHANGES IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. WE WERE GREAT POWER AND OUR POLICIES WERE INTERCONTINENTAL IN SCOPE. NEVERTHELESS, INDIVIDUAL POWERS ON THOSE CONTINENTS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT THEY COULD EXPECT WITH REGARD TO THEMSELVES. QUESTION THEY WERE ASKING WAS WHETHER THERE WOULD BE CHANGES FROM THE POLICIES OF THE PAST AND WHETHER MR. CARTER AS PRESIDENT WOULD BE THE SAME AS MR. CARTER AS CANDIDATE. BOUMEDIENE RATHER EXPECTED HE WOULD NOT AND CERTAINLY HOPED SO BECAUSE AS CANDIDATE HE HAD MADE STATEMENTS REGARDING ARABS AND OIL EMBARGO DURING THE HEAT OF THE CAMPAIGN WHICH HE WAS SURE PRESIDENT WOULD REALIZE WERE ILL-ADVISED ONCE HE WAS IN OFFICE.

4. FOR ALGERIANS THERE WERE NUMBER OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS. WHAT WOULD POLICIES OF U.S. BE TOWARD THIS REGION AND TOWARD THE NEAR EAST WITH REGARD TO THE REGION, ALGERIANS THOUGHT WE WERE ILL-ADVISED TO FAVOR ONE SIDE OVER THE OTHER IN THE SAHARA DISPUTE. ALL THEY HOPED FOR FROM US WAS NEUTRALITY. THEY REALIZED WE HAD INTERESTS IN MOROCCO, BUT THOSE INTERESTS WERE PRIMARILY POLITICAL. OUR MATERIAL INTERESTS IN ALGERIA FAR OUTWEIGHED THOSE IN MOROCCO. IF WE FAVORED ONE OVER THE OTHER, WE RISKED UPSETTING LOCAL POWER BALANCE AND JEOPARDIZING OUR INTERESTS HERE.

5. THERE WERE OF COURSE BILATERAL ECONOMIC QUESTIONS (MEANING FPC AND EXIM) BUT ALSO OF MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ALGERIANS WAS QUESTION OF POLICIES WE WERE TO FOLLOW IN THE CIEC AT PARIS. THAT CONFERENCE HAD PRODUCED ALMOST NO RESULTS TO DATE. ALGERIANS FRANKLY HAD IMPRESSION WE WERE STALLING. THEY HOPED NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD TAKE NEW LOOK AT QUESTIONS POSED. PROBLEM WAS NOT TO IMPOSE SOLUTION THAT FAVORED ONE SIDE OVER THE OTHER BUT TO FIND MIDDLE GROUND ON WHICH WE COULD ALL

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AGREE.

6. PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD READ MEMORANDUM I HAD LEFT WITH MINISTRY INDUSTRY AND ENERGY ON OIL PROBLEMS. ENERGY, OF COURSE, WAS ONE OF PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF CIEC DISCUSSIONS. EVERYBODY SAW PROBLEM OF OIL PRICES FROM HIS OWN ANGLE. EVEN CASTRO SAW IT FROM ANGLE OF SUGAR PRICES VERSUS OIL PRICES. HE PERSONALLY WAS CONVINCED THAT WE WOULD REALIZE

IN TIME THAT OPEC HAD DONE US A FAVOR BY INCREASING OIL PRICES AND THUS MAKING IT ECONOMIC FOR AMERICAN INDUSTRY TO DEVELOP ALTERNATE SOURCES OF ENERGY. FURTHER PRICE INCREASE NOW NECESSARY TO PROTECT INTERESTS OF PRODUCERS. ALGERIANS FAMILIAR WITH OUR ARGUMENTS, BUT THEY HAD TO TAKE STEPS TO COMPENSATE FOR THE INCREASED PRICES THEY WERE PAYING FOR INDUSTRIAL GOODS.

7. PRESIDENT SAID ANOTHER PROBLEM WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH SENATOR STEVENSON WAS THAT OF ANGOLA. HE HAD IMPRESSION AMERICANS HAD CONCLUDED THAT ALGERIANS WERE ALLIES OF SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN THIS AFFAIR. THIS WAS MISTAKE. ALGERIANS HAD KNOWN NETO SINCE 1960 AND THEY SUPPORTED HIM AS LEADER OF GENUINE LIBERATION MOVEMENT. ENTIRE CONTINENT HAD BEEN DIVIDED WITH EVERYBODY BACKING HIS OWN CHOICE. AMERICANS HAD BACKED ONE FACTION; ALGERIANS WERE BACKING ANOTHER. THIS WAS NOT SURPRISING.

8. I SAID I HOPED PRESIDENT WOULD PARDON ME FOR NOTING THAT OUR REACTION TO ANGOLA WAS SIMILAR TO ALGERIAN REACTION TO SAHARA. WE HAD THOUGHT WE HAD SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT ANGOLA, BUT CUBANS, SOVIETS AND OTHERS HAD IGNORED US. ALGERIANS SIMILARLY HAD THOUGHT THEY HAD SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT SAHARA AND AT THE LAST MOMENT THEY HAD BEEN IGNORED. PRESIDENT INTERJECTED, "AND THEY WOULD NOT HAVE DONE IT IF THEY HAD NOT HAD GREEN LIGHT FROM YOU*" I REMONSTRATED, BUT HE SAID AMERICANS SEEMED TO BE AFRAID WHENEVER LOCAL POWER RAISED IT HEAD AND ASSERTED IT INDEPENDENCE. WE SHOULD NOT BE. IT WAS IN OUR INTEREST TO HAVE STRONG INDEPENDENT STATES IN THE REGION.

9. I CONTINUED THAT AMERICANS SAW ALGERIANS AS ALLIES OF SOVIETS AND CUBANS IN ANGOLA AFFAIR BECAUSE SOVIET AIRLIFT
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HAD MADE USE OF THE ALGIERS AIRPORT. BOUMEDIENE NODDED AND SAID THAT WAS TRUE BUT THERE WAS A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TECHNICAL STOPS AT AIRPORT AND ALLIANCES. ALGERIANS ALLIED WITH NO ONE AND HAD NO INTEREST IN SEEING SOVIETS OR ANY OTHER GREAT POWER TRYING TO IMPOSE THEMSELVES ON AFRICA.

10. BOUMEDIENE SAID HE THOUGHT THERE WAS ROOM FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE NEW U.S. TEAM TAKE A LOOK FOR ITSELF AND DEVELOP ITS OWN IDEAS ABOUT THIS REGION AND ABOUT RELATIONS WITH ALGERIANS. A VISIT HERE BY A SENIOR PERSONALITY OF NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE MOST WELCOME. FOR HIS PART HE HOPED TO NAME NEW ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR EITHER JUST BEFORE OR JUST AFTER INAUGURATION. IF I HAD CHANCE TO SEE PRESIDENT-ELECT WHILE IN WASHINGTON, HE ASKED THAT

I CONVEY HIS PERSONAL GREETINGS TO HIM.

11. COMMENT: IT IS UNUSUAL FOR BOUMEDIENE TO RECEIVE FOREIGN AMBASSADORS AT THEIR PERSONAL REQUEST EXCEPT ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS (SUCH AS THEIR DEPARTURE OR DELIVERY OF A PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE). HIS WILLINGNESS RECEIVE ME AND TALK AS FRANKLY AS HE DID IS INDICATION OF SERIOUS ALGERIAN INTEREST IN IMPROVING RELATIONS. THAT INTEREST MAY BE STIMULATED IN LARGE PART BY THE INCREASING AWARENESS OF NEED FOR OUR FINANCING AND OUR MARKETS, BUT THAT IS AFTER ALL THE SORT OF ENLIGHTENED SELF-INTEREST WE HAVE BEEN HOPING THEY WOULD START SEEING. INDEED, IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT OUR POLICY ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH ALGERIA MAY BEGIN TO PAY OFF IN TERMS OF MODERATING ALGERIAN POSITIONS TO SOME EXTENT. HAVE NO ILLUSIONS AS TO EXTENT OF THAT MODERATION, BUT CERTAINLY THERE HAS BEEN CHANGE IN ATTITUDE OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. THE ALGERIANS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE AWARE OF THE FALLACY OF AUTARKY AND ARE REALIZING THAT THEY NEED US.

12. HOPE TO DISCUSS ABOVE IN DETAIL WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICERS OF DEPARTMENT DURING MY CONSULTATION NEXT WEEK.

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